

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 05831 261230Z

47

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /085 W

----- 001181

R 261135Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8338

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PO

SUBJ: DEMOCRATIC LABOR UNIONS MEET

REF: LISBON 5538 (DTG 131719Z AUG 76)

SUMMARY: THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS ALREADY ON RECORD AS FAVORING
A NATIONAL LABOR CONGRESS TO REUNITE THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT, DUE TO THEIR SUPERIOR
ORGANIZING ABILITY, THE PCP WOULD DOMINATE ANY NEWLY CREATED
UNIFIED LABOR CONFEDERATION. IN A MEETING IN COIMBRA
SOCIALIST AND OTHER UNIONS NOT AFFILIATED WITH INTERSINDICAL
HAVE DECIDED THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH THEY WILL INSIST FOR
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PAGE 02 LISBON 05831 261230Z

HOLDING A NATIONAL LABOR CONGRESS. MINISTER OF LABOR CURTO

BELIEVES INTERSINDICAL WILL BE UNWILLING TO
ACCEPT THESE CONDITIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THIRTY-NINE "DEMOCRATIC" LABOR UNIONS NOT
AFFILIATED WITH THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED INTERSINDICAL
HELD A TWO-DAY MEETING IN COIMBRA AUGUST 23-24.
PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO COORDINATE ATTITUDES TOWARD
THE NATIONAL LABOR CONGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN PROPOSED TO
UNIFY LABOR MOVEMENT. MEETING SUCCEEDED IN ACHIEVING A
UNIFIED STANCE AND THE UNIONS AGREED TO HOLD A FURTHER MEETING
IN COIMBRA SEPTEMBER 13-14. MAJOR POINT AGREED BY
UNIONS WAS THAT THE ORGANIZING COMMISSION FOR THE NATIONAL
LABOR CONGRESS SHOULD HAVE EQUAL REPRESENTATION FROM UNIONS
AFFILIATED AND UNAFFILIATED WITH INTERSINDICAL - ELEVEN
MEMBERS FROM EACH SIDE. ALL PREPARATORY MEETINGS AND SESSIONS
OF THE CONGRESS ARE ALSO TO BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND TO
MEDIA.

2. ORGANIZERS OF THE COIMBRA MEETING ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED
SEVENTY UNIONS WOULD BE REPRESENTED. PRESENCE OF ONLY
THIRTY-NINE UNIONS WOULD SEEM TO CONSTITUTE A
PSYCHOLOGICAL SET-BACK FOR "DEMOCRATIC" UNIONS BUT
SOCIALIST LABOR LEADERS INDICATE NUMBER NOT AS
SIGNIFICANT AS IMPORTANCE OF UNIONS PRESENT. MAJOR
UNIONS REPRESENTED WERE: LISBON BANK WORKERS,
LISBON OFFICE WORKERS, CLERICAL WORKERS OF FARO,
CHAUFFEURS OF OPORTO, OFFICE WORKERS OF OPORTO,
AND METAL WORKERS OF AVEIRO. ORGANIZERS OF MEETING
CITE FIGURES INDICATING THERE ARE NEARLY 400 UNIONS
RECOGNIZED IN PORTUGAL. SEVENTY ALLEGEDLY SUPPORT
THE "OPEN LETTER" EARLIER CIRCULATED BY "DEMOCRATIC"
UNIONS. AN ADDITIONAL 180 ARE UNAFFILIATED WITH
INTERINDICAL AND ARE NOT POLITICALLY ALIGNED. IN
CONTRAST, INTERSINDICAL CLAIMS THE ALLEGIANCE OF A
MAJORITY OF THE UNIONS, INCLUDING THOSE HAVING
THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP.

4. LABOR MINISTER MARCELO CURTO TOLD AMBASSADOR ON
AUGUST 25 THAT HE AND PRIME MINISTER MARIO SOARES WERE PLEASED
WITH OUTCOME OF COIMBRA MEETING. CURTO SAID THEY
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PAGE 03 LISBON 05831 261230Z

THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT INTERSINDICAL WOULD BE
WILLING TO ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS FOR HOLDING THE
NATIONAL LABOR CONGRESS WHICH THE DEMOCRATIC UNIONS HAVE
AGREED TO IMPOSE, PARTICULARLY THE CONDITION THAT MEETINGS
BE OPEN TO THE PRESS. THUS, THEY BELIEVE BLAME FOR FAILURE
TO ACHIEVE A REUNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT WILL EVENTUALLY FALL
ON THE PCP RATHER THAN THE SOCIALISTS.

5. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF THE SOCIALISTS' CONTINUED
CAREFUL VERBAL SUPPORT FOR A UNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT
AND FOR A NATIONAL LABOR CONGRESS, THIS MEETING
OF THE "DEMOCRATIC" UNIONS INDICATES A FURTHER
SOLIDIFICATION OF A NUCLEUS OF NON-COMMUNIST
UNIONS AND MAKES THE EVENTUAL HOLDING OF A
NATIONAL LABOR CONGRESS - AND A REUNIFIED LABOR
MOVEMENT - MORE UNLIKELY. IF THE SOCIALISTS
CAN EVENTUALLY AVOID BOTH THE CONGRESS AND THE
BLAME FOR ITS COLLAPSE, THEY WILL HAVE PULLED
OFF A MAJOR POLITICAL COUP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR UNIONS, MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LISBON05831
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED PER 78 LISBON 1630
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760326-0035
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760817/aaaaaooog.tel
Line Count: 127
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: LOU
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: UNCLASSIFIED; CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LOU
Reference: 76 LISBON 5538
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 MAR 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <13 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEMOCRATIC LABOR UNIONS MEET
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006